DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 394 153 CS 509 230

AUTHOR Shaver, Paul M.
TITLE Responsibilities in Mentoring and Advising of International Students: Graduate and Professional Options.
PUB DATE Nov 95
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (81st, San Antonio, TX, November 18-21, 1995).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Biological Sciences; *Conflict Resolution; *Culture Conflict; *Foreign Students; Higher Education; *Intercultural Communication; *Interpersonal Communication; Mentors; Models; *Multicultural Education; School Counseling
IDENTIFIERS *Adviser Role; Rhetorical Strategies

ABSTRACT

To examine the dynamism and productive qualities of multicultural interaction, a chromosomal bivalency model was borrowed from the biological sciences. Dilemmas inherent in contact between cultures emerge from the sites of multicultural conflict. Understanding these dilemmas allows interactants to have insights into other cultures as well as into their own culture. The chromosomal model of multicultural communication provides a realistic and positive method for analyzing and improving multicultural communication. The concept of bivalency refers to the creation of a double chromosome. The double chromosome is created by an attraction of the genes on two helixes. This attraction results in adherence of the helixes to one another and a functional coherence that results in the double chromosome operating as a single unit. Generally speaking, all of the combinatory genes from one helix do not dominate all of those on the other helix. Instead, a complex interactional bivalency is the usual pattern. Use of the chromosomal bivalency suggests that many cultural differences between interactive partners exist. However, the interactants are not compelled to resolve each of these. The chromosomal bivalency model suggests that particular sites of conflict are rhetorically significant interfaces between cultures. The emergent discourse of the interactants reveals the semiotically integrated cultural perspectives that are subject to perspectival rhetorical analysis. (Contains 21 references.) (TB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 394 153

Responsibilities in Mentoring and Advising of International Students: Graduate and Professional Options

Paul M. Shaver, J.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Mass Communication
Indiana University South Bend
South Bend, Indiana USA
219-237-4548
PShaver@IUSB.vines.Indiana.edu

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
P Shaver
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

*A paper presented as part of the panel "International and ESL Undergraduate Students: Communication Issues in Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Student Acculturation" at the Speech Communication Association Conference, San Antonio, TX, November, 1995.

CS509230

Responsibilities in Mentoring and Advising of International Students: Graduate and Professional Options

Although interaction between members of mainstream cultural groups and nonmainstream cultural groups is sometimes perceived as negative conflict, a substantial amount of research and new communication paradigms characterize such conflict as potentially positive. Interpretive communication research analyzes the interactions from the perspectives of the interactants and the findings can be instrumental in solving conflicts and in improving understanding.

Interaction between international students and U.S. students, faculty, and the university community is frequently problematic but is rarely the focus of attention. The increasing number of international undergraduate students at universities that have been been heretofore homogeneous can be the catalyst for positive change in the university climate. However, the rising numbers of students should also result in ethical and positive conflict perspectives from the university and the faculty in their interaction with the international undergraduate student.

Using a chromosomal bivalency model borrowed from the biological sciences, this paper examines the dynamism and productive qualities of multicultural interaction. Dilemmas inherent in contact between cultures emerge from the sites of multicultural conflict. Understanding these dilemmas allows

interactants to have insights into other cultures as well as into their own culture. The chromosomal bivalency model of multicultural communication provides a realistic and positive method for analyzing and improving multicultural communication.

A Consciousness of Plurality

In spite of the societal emphasis on diversity and the lip-service paid to multicultural issues in the U.S., the perspective that there are plural consciousnesses is not found in organizational services and decisions on university campuses. Most universities are bureaucracies that are still working on top-down management principles from Weber's machine-model and react to social change slowly. Universities are designed to manage homogeneous Euro-American faculty, students, and staff. Culturally diverse and internationally different employees and students complicate the process of education and slow the "wheels" of the bureaucratic machine.

Bakhtin (1948) speaks of Dostoevsky and the issue of plurality in society:

> [Dostoevsky's characters are] not voiceless slaves . . . , but free people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him. A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in

> a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with his [sic] own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, 1948)

Conflict and culture are companion issues in U.S. society. The assumption is that conflict is an negative and inevitable outcome when people of different cultures communicate. Among the terminologies used to describe such communication are: cross-cultural, interethnic, interracial, intercultural, international, and multicultural. The importance of such labeling is not a superficial concern. Rather, just as groups who differ from mainstream society are impacted by naming, self-naming, and name-calling, the nomenclature for the communication between people of diverse cultures is a significant indicator of societal perspectives about such communication.

From early anthrbpological studies, the perceptions of cultures that differ from the observer's own culture have been cast in tones of ethnocentrism (Geertz, 1973). Gudykunst and Kim (1984) and Samovar and Porter (1992) provide analyses of the utility and usage of the various words that represent communication between cultures. The term cross-cultural often has been used to compare communication styles, values-attitudes-beliefs, and artifacts of one culture to another. Frequently, inherent in such comparisons are negative evaluations of one of

the two cultures in the comparison.

The terms interethnic and interracial are limited in their scope because they focus on ambiguous, misleading, inaccurate, and arbitrary anthropological divisions of race. These terms are closely related to pejorative descriptions of nondominant groups as viewed from the ethnocentric perspective of dominate groups in U.S. society. The descriptor intercultural has been used with less prejudicial perspectives, but this term also implies that a dominant culture is in communication with a nondominant culture. Under this presumption, the nondominant culture is obliged--for its survival--to adapt to the dominate culture (Folb, 1992). International communication is used to describe official communication between governmental agencies or transnational corporations

Contemporary public communication and media representations rarely utilize the inappropriate "melting pot" metaphor of cultural adaptation and assimilation. Rather, public discourse seems to grudgingly acknowledge that diversity is positive for U.S. society. Public and private discourse elements regarding cultural differences and interaction between representatives of diverse cultures are critical to U.S. society. This paper suggests that utilization of the term multicultural communication focuses constructively on communication between diverse cultures as emergent discourse rather than conflict.

A Model of Multicultural Communication

In consulting with private and public organizations that

have experienced negative results from interaction between differing cultures (L. Shaver, 1993; L. D. Shaver & P. Shaver, 1995; P. Shaver, & L. Shaver, 1992a, b, c; Glenn (now Shaver), 1990), the author and his research partner have been asked to step into crisis situations involving culturally different parties. In reflexively evaluating these consulting situations, a model of multicultural communication has been developed to explain the process that they have used in such crises. The chromosomal bivalency model facilitates the conceptualization of multicultural communication conflict as emergent discourse and not as a negative experience. This conceptualization, in turn, allows the implementation of perspectival rhetorical analysis to examine the discourse of groups in conflict (Burke, 1969a, 1969b; 1970; Cherwitz & Hikins, 1986; Eco, 1990; P. Shaver, 1991; L.D. Shaver & P. Shaver, 1995). The Chromosomal Bivalency Model

The concept of bivalency as utilized in biological science refers to the creation of a double chromosome (Gribbin, 1987). The double chromosome is created by an attraction of the genes on two helixes. This attraction results in adherence of the helixes to one another and a functional coherence which results in the double chromosome operating as a single unit. This unitary function is seen to be facilitated by the suppression or reconstitution of genes on one helix by attracted genes on the other helix. Generally speaking, all of the combinatory genes from one helix do not dominate all of the combinatory genes on the other helix. Instead, a complex interactional bivalency is

the usual pattern (Bradbury, Maclean, & Matthews, 1981; Dyer, 1979; Gribbin, 1987; John & Lewis, 1975; Risley, 1986).

In similar fashion, it has been found that for purposes of multicultural consultation and analysis of multicultural interaction that even minimal participant or observational research of these interactions will reveal emergent relevant cultural traits that participate in observable conflict. These cultural traits are found at interactional sites that are meaningful for analysis and consultation because the interactive sites "chosen" by the parties constitute an intercultural discourse system. This emergent discourse system is therefore subject to a perspectival rhetorical analysis that provides insights into the perspective, or world view, of the interactants. Consultation and mediation involve the careful revelation of the perspectival nature of the positions of the parties in order that an accommodation can be arrived at by the multicultural interactants that is consistent with the ethical goals of multicultural interventionists as well as the goals of the culturally different interactants.

Implementation of the Chromosomal Bivalency Theory

Under the umbrella of any theoretical perspective lies epistemological assumptions that drive research. Within the concept of the chromosomal bivalency theory lies the assumption that humans construct reality through interaction. Their communication (e.g., verbal and nonverbal) is both the key and the criteria of social reality. Under this theory, the insights

necessary to consult with individuals who are in conflict with culturally different people arise from analysis of the talk of the interactants (Glenn (now Shaver), 1990; P. Shaver, 1991). Therefore, the interactions themselves can be analyzed.

The significance of this model for analysis of multicultural communication is that its application assumes that only certain "sites of conflict" are addressed in both interaction and subsequent analysis. Use of the chromosomal bivalency model suggests that many cultural differences between interactive partners exist. However, the interactants are not compelled to resolve each of these. The chromosomal bivalency model suggests that particular "sites of conflict" are rhetorically significant interfaces between cultures. The emergent discourse of the interactants reveals the semiotically integrated cultural perspectives that are subject to perspectival rhetorical analysis.

The Multicultural Model and the International Student

The ethical approach by universities toward students and faculty would be to recognize that differences evoke conflict. Preparation for the inevitable conflict with training and open dialogue would allow for positive dialogue. To assume that the international students will "melt" into the campus climate is to ignore history; to assume that the U.S. undergraduate students will not have conflict with their peers is to allow for unresolved conflict to affect all students negatively; and to hand the burden of cultural training to unknowledgeable faculty

by organizational default is to create another population of dissatisfied people in the university community.

The ethical stance is for the university to understand the potential contributions of international students but to plan for their cultural adaptation training. The ethical approach is for faculty to have training in multicultural issues so that they are better able to understand themselves, their U.S. students, and their international students. The ethical university will provide ongoing training to staff so that they and special organizational units are prepared for the acculturation process and bureaucratic details that must be handled both by students and staff.

The Image of American, The Image of Success

Regardless of the occasional tarnished international image of the United States of American in the last thirty years (e.g., Bush and Japan, Vietnam, changing foreign policy, and so forth), the U.S. is still perceived by most of the media-affected world as the most prosperous country in the world. The value of a U.S. education for most international students is without reckoning. Through individual governments or through the pooling of the entire family's resources, students come to the U.S. to represent their family and their country. They look to their professors both for graduate school direction and professional career counseling. The downside is that faculty and universities are often not knowledgeable enough to give international students supportive and correct information.

Career and placement offices on campus often have international listings for U.S. students, but their information often is nonexistent on job opportunities for international students, even in the students' own countries. Professors should be able to advise students on quality graduate schools. The assumption is that a professor is the best source for that information. The reality is that many professors know about the university where they were trained. If they are not active in their national and international organizations, they may not be aware of changing programs, new degrees, and the negatives of other programs. This is very often true on the smaller regional campuses where isolation and provincial perspectives are sometimes allowed to exist.

International students have the same needs as U.S. students: (a) education, (b) training in managing the system, (c) graduate school information and analysis, and (d) career counseling. The unfortunate fact is that few universities or professors have the capability to meet the international students' needs. The dilemma or the site of the conflict is that international students assume that their university and their professors can provide those needs. Here is an entry from an Rwanda student's journal:

> Before to come in U.S.A. I was very curious to know how people live, dress up, their culture and their habits. I was reading books, watching movies about America. I met a gentleman who was approximately fifty years old.

He spent two years at the University of Michigan. I asked him many questions about schools here and about people. This is what he told me: About school, he said that American system was totally different from French system. Teachers are close to the students. A teacher and a student can eat or drink a pop in classroom which is unimaginable to our system. The positive aspect of school in U.S.A. is that teachers teach everybody in the classroom not few people who are the best.

When I took this class . . . [I see] culture differences is something deep.

One of my first experiences, when I arrived here in U.S.A. . . . was a kind of deception. I was deceived because the image of U.S.A. I had (from the media) was totally different from what I saw. When I was in Africa, they used to show us, big cities like New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago. Nice images beautiful places. This created in my mind a whole country which look like these big cities. I didn't know that they have homeless or poor people . . . . I was very disappointed. (Rwanda student journal, Fall, 1994, used with permission)

This student was disappointed because of the conflict between the media image of the U.S. and the reality of the U.S. It is the responsibility of universities not to disappoint

international students with the substance of education, graduate information, and professional advice while they are students.

Conclusion

Multiculturality is a constructive term that does not emphasize the dominance of one culture over another nor does it ethnocentrically evaluate differing cultures. Plurality should be conscious in the process of higher education. The cultural bivalency model allows for self-analysis of one's own culture and analysis of other cultures on an issue-by-issue basis. The emergent discourse is not a societal, university, or world problem that is labeled as conflict. Rather, the emergent discourse is interaction between people--multicultural communication. International students will experience conflict in U.S. universities. The conflict can be positive when the system and the individuals are self-reflexive and open to self- and other-knowledge.

References

Bakhtin, M. (1984). Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics (C. Emerson, Ed. and Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bradbury, E., & Maclean, n., & Matthews, H. (1981). DNA, hromatin and chromosomes. Boston: Blackwell Scientific Publications.

Burke, K. (1970). The rhetoric of religion. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Burke, K. (1969a). A grammar of motives. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Burke, K. (1969b). A rhetoric of motives. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Cherwitz, R., & Hikins, J. (1986). Communication and knowledge: An investigation in rhetorical epistemology. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina.

Dyer, A. (1979). Investigating chromosomes. London: Edward Arnold.

Eco, U. (1991). The limits of interpretation. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Folb, E. (1992). Who's got the room at the top? Issues of dominance and nondominance in intercultural communication. In L. Samovar & R. Porter (Eds.), Intercultural communication: A reader (6th edition) (119-127). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Geertz, C. (1973). The interpretation of cultures. New York: Basic.

Glenn (Shaver), L. D. (1990). Health care communication between American Indian women and a White male doctor: A study of interaction at a public health care facility. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Oklahoma). Dissertation Abstracts International.

Gribbin, J. (1987). In Search of the double helix. New York: Bantam.

Gudykunst, W., & Kim, Y. (1984). Communicating with strangers: An approach to intercultural communication. New York: Random House.

John, B., & Lewis, K. (1975). Chromosome hierarchy: An introduction to the biology of the chromosome. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Risley, M. (1986). Chromosome structure and function. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Samovar, L. & Porter, R. (Eds.). (1991). Intercultural communication: A reader (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Shaver, L.D., & Shaver, P. (1995). Care givers in communication with HIV patients: A perspectival rhetorical analysis of health discourse. In L. Fuller and L. Shilling (Eds.), Communicating about communicable diseases. Amherst, MA: HRD Press.

Shaver, P. (1991). An analysis of political discourse elements supportive of the mass communication process in the United States with specific reference to arguments utilizing First Amendment principles. (Doctoral Dissertation, University

of Oklahoma). Dissertation Abstracts International.

Shaver, P., & Shaver, L.D. (1992a). Applying perspectival rhetorical analysis in intercultural consulting: The Chromosomal bivalency model. Intercultural Communication Studies, 2, 1-21.

Shaver, P., & Shaver, L. D. (1992b). "Icons" of bureaucratic therapy: An application of Eco's semiotic methodology. A paper presented to the International Communication Association, Miami, Fl.

Shaver, P., & Shaver, L.D. (1992c). Signs in the organization: Architectural changes as organizational rhetoric in a public health facility. Paper presented to Western Speech Communication Association, Boise, ID.